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Privatization begins with Mill Bay ferry

BC Ferries has issued an RFEOI (Request for Expressions of Interest) to see who might be interested in operating the Mill Bay ferry, which runs between Brentwood, on the Saanich Peninsula, and Mill Bay, on Vancouver Island north of the Malahat. The RFEOI is preliminary to an eighteen-month process which might end in the subcontracting of the Mill Bay run to another ferry operator.

The process follows Section 69 of the *Coastal Ferries Act*, which required BC Ferries to make continuous efforts to contract to others the services for which they are responsible. It would fulfill the goal of the *Act*: maximum privatization of ferry service.

Expressions of Interest received will be reviewed by BC Ferries. The next stage of the bidding process will be a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to determine which of the organizations expressing interest are actually qualified to bid. Qualified bidders would then be sent a Request for Proposals (RFP), and their proposals would be evaluated, with the possibility that a long-term contract could be awarded. An independent fairness auditor will oversee the process.

BC Ferries itself is also expected to bid on the provision of the ferry service. This provides a benchmark and also ensures that there is at least one serious bid. The Mill Bay run, one of the shortest on the coast, provides a useful shortcut, avoiding the Malahat section of the Island Highway, which is sometimes hazardous in winter.

BCers To Name The New Ferries—Even If They Can't Build Them!

Meanwhile, BC Ferries has announced a contest to name the three new 'Super-C' class ferries presently being designed in Germany. Steel cutting for the new ferries will start in September 2006, with the first of the new ferries scheduled for delivery in December 2007. Names for the new ferries will be judged by an advisory board comprised of two journalists (none from *Island Tides*), the president of Tourism Victoria, and seven BC Ferries executives. Rules for the contest, which ends on January 31, 2006, can be found on the BC Ferries website.

The names 'Queen of RFEOI', 'Queen of RFQ', and 'Queen of RFP' have already been ruled out. ✍

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